Political Science 416:
Survey Research in American Politics

Spring 2021
Professor Stein
Wednesday 2:45PM-5:25PM
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Office: 202 Herzstein

Overview:

The major objectives of this course are to introduce students to the skills and resources needed to design and conduct a survey. The substantive focus of the course will be public opinion surveys on topics of politics, public policy and individual political behavior. Students will learn via class readings, presentations, group projects, and practical experience: 1. How to design surveys 2. How to sample in surveys 3. How to develop, evaluate, and ask survey questions 4. How to measure survey reliability and validity 5. How to conduct self-administered and mail surveys 6. How to decrease survey nonresponse 7. How to reduce error in survey research 8. How to do post-collection survey data processing 9. How to conduct survey research with integrity meeting human subject standards. This semester the class will work on a collaborative survey research project that studies the experiences of residents in Houston area during Hurricane Harvey.

Office Hours: Tuesday 9-11AM

Prerequisites:

Poli.395 (Statistics) or any comparable course. Poli. 210 (American Government) or any comparable course.

Attendance:

Students are expected to attend all weekly seminars and be prepared to discuss the week's readings and written assignments.

Grading:
Weekly assignments: 50%
Team survey projects: 30%
Class presentations: 20%

Textbook and Readings:

Fowler, Floyd J., Jr. 2015. Survey Research Methods, 5th Edition. Los Angeles: Sage.

Don A. Dillman, Jolene D. Smyth and Leah Melani Christian. 20014, *Internet, Phone, Mail and Mixed Mode Surveys: The Tailed Design Method* 4th Edition, Wiley. [Students are recommended to purchase Dillman et al, but assigned readings will available for photo copying]

* All other readings will be available on the Rice Canvass course website.

Assignments and course requirements

There will be a weekly written assignment to be submitted on Canvass by 5PM on Tuesday. Each student should be prepared to discuss their written assignment in class.

As part of a team project students will design, field and analyze a survey on an assigned topic. Students will make a series of class presentations on the design and execution of their team survey projects. Students will also serve a discussants and reviewers of other team's work.

CITI Training: Each student must individually complete Rice University's Online Human Subjects Training available here: https://compliance.rice.edu/rcr/citi-training. Successful completion of Human Subjects Training must be completed by February 8. Send me (stein@rice.edu) the confirmation email you receive upon successful completion of the Training course.

All students should take the Qualtrics online short coure. Quatrics in a web based survey platform that many of your will use in the completing our individual and team research projects. To sign up for a Quatrics account login at: https://oie.rice.edu/survey/

Course outline:

January 27: Introduction: Course goals and requirements

February 3: To survey or not?

Readings:

Fowler, Chapter 1
Dillman et al, Chapter 1
Converse. J. 2009. *Survey Research in the United States*. Ch.?

Written assignment:

Make a case for conducting or not conducting a survey to answer/study each of the following research questions:

A. What is the incidence of voter turnout among persons under the age of 25?
B. What is the public's preference for skim versus whole milk?
C. Why do some people vote in-person and why do others vote by mail?

February 10: Who to survey, sampling and types of errors in surveys

Readings:

Fowler, Chapters 2, 3
Dillman et al, Chapter 3

* Couper, M.P. 2007. "Issues of representation in eHealth research," *American Journal of Preventative Medicine* 32(5):S83-S89

Written assignment:

Choose a research question about American politics (e.g., public perceptions about pending tax legislation) on which you might conduct a survey and identify the preferred/recommended:

A. Target population
B. Sample frame
C. Coverage rate (preferred)
D. Coverage error
E. Sample
F. Sample selection
G. Completed sample
H. Sampling error

Provide a brief (1-3 sentences) justification for your choices.

February 24: Implementing a sample design: Nonresponse rate and nonresponse bias

Readings:

Fowler, Chapter 4
Dillman et al, Chapter 2
*AAPOR. 2016. "Standard Definitions: Final Dispositions of Case Codes and Outcome Rates for Surveys."
*Ketter, S. et al. 2006. "Gauging the impact of growing nonresponse on estimates of a RDD telephone survey." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 75(5):759-770
*Battaglia, M.P. et al .2008. "An evaluation of respondent selection methods for household mail surveys." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 72(3):459-469
* Groves, R.M. 2006. "Nonresponse rates and nonresponse bias in household surveys," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 70(5): 720-736.
*An Evaluation of the 2016 Election Polls, American Association of Public Opinion Research, http://www.aapor.org/Education-Resources/Reports/An-Evaluation-of-2016-Election-Polls-in-the-U-S.aspx

Written assignment:

Identify a nonresponse rate issue(s) in surveys conducted for the 2016 Presidential election that did and did not result in a nonresponse bias. Explain and justify your answers and offer a solution to the nonresponse bias(es) identified.

March 3, 10: Methods of data collection

Readings:

Fowler, Chapter 5

Dillman et al., Chapters 8-11
*Li, Nebula. 2006. "Interactive Voice Response," *Public Policy Polling*
* Tourangeau, R. 2002. "Self-Administered Questions by Telephone," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 66:265-278.
*Couper, M. 2006. "Technology Trends in Survey Data Collection," *Social Science Computer Review*. 23:486-501.
* Santosa, Phillip et al. 2016. "Survey Experiments with Google Consumer Surveys." *Political Analysis* xx: 1-18.

Written assignments:

1/7: You have been asked to identify the scope and degree to which Hurricane Harvey effected residents and businesses in the Fort Bend, Galveston, Harris and Montgomery counties. Identify a survey method for answering this question and justify your choice in terms of: response/nonresponse rates (and associated bias), cost, efficiency and coverage.

1/14: For the same survey of residents and businesses in the four county area identify a mixed mode for conducting this survey and justify your answers in terms of response/nonresponse rates (and bias), cost, efficiency and coverage.

March 17: Writing questions and questionnaires

Readings:

Fowler, Chapter 6
Dillman et al., Chapter 4-7
*Feldman and Zaller, 1992. "A simple theory of survey response: Answering questions versus revealing preferences." *American Journal of Political Science* 36:579-616.
*Krosnick, J.A. et al. 2002. "The impact of 'no opinion' response options on data quality," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 66(3):371-403.
*Holbrook, A. et al. 2007. "Response order effects in dichotomous categorical questions presented orally," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 71:325-348
*Segilman. L. 1989. "Some like it hot," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 53(2):246-257.
*UH Hobby Center, Hurricane Harvey Survey
* Blackburn "Hurricane/Tropical Storm Harvey: Policy Perspectives."
*Kaiser Family Foundation and Episcopal Health Foundation, An Early Assessment of Hurricane Harvey's Impact on Vulnerable Texans in the Gulf Coast Region

Written assignment:

You have been asked to write a survey question dealing public support for different proposals before Houston area governments to prepare for and respond to severe weather events [see Blackburn "Hurricane/Tropical Storm Harvey: Policy Perspectives."]. In writing your survey question(s) make it clear what the

survey mode (internet, live telephone, IVR, mail, etc.) you will be for using to administer/ask your survey question(s).

March 24: Evaluating survey designs, questions and instruments

Readings:
Fowler, Chapter 7
Review Dillman et al Chapters 4-7

Written assignment:
Evaluate one of the following surveys:

Harvey Hurricane Survey
2016 Texas Presidential Election Survey
2016 Texas Presidential Primary Election Survey
2017 7th Congressional District Primary Election Survey

March 31: Preparing and analyzing survey data

Readings:
Fowler, Chapters 9

April 7: TBA

April 14: Team survey research proposal presentations

April 21: Team survey research design and instrument presentations

April 28: Fielding Surveys
Readings:
Fowler, Chapter 8

May 12: Presentation of survey results